

VZCZCXRO4034
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHVJ #1656/01 2990715
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 250715Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9153
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUZEJAA/USNIC SARAJEVO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 SARAJEVO 001656

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA -- DETERIORATING POLITICAL SITUATION
JEOPARDIZES NATO AGENDA AND DEFENSE REFORM PROCESS

REF: A) SARAJEVO 569 B) SARAJEVO 1596 C) 07 SARAJEVO
1999

Classified By: Amb. Charles English for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: NATO SYG De Hoop Scheffer called Bosnia's Foreign Minister, Sven Alkalaj, to Brussels October 15 to discuss the deteriorating political climate in Bosnia and the threat it poses to Bosnia's progress towards NATO membership. Members of Bosnia's NATO Coordination Group admit that political squabbling is rendering Bosnia's state institutions incapable of participating adequately in NATO processes and putting the NATO reform agenda at risk. The government has reached impasses on even the "easy stuff" like staffing Bosnia's NATO mission and implementing last year's agreement on defense property. Efforts to reach compromises on such issues have been impacted by the deteriorating political situation in Bosnia, particularly the bad political blood within the Presidency. NATO-related reforms requiring difficult and meaningful compromises appear less and less feasible, especially those outside the defense institutions, such as many of the reforms contained in Bosnia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Although politicians from Republika Srpska (RS) still say that they support Bosnia's NATO integration, they are escalating their campaign to undermine and, in some cases, dismantle state institutions, just as Bosnia has kicked-off its Intensified Dialogue process -- a process that specifically requires state institutions to become more capable. In this context, Bosnia's path to NATO will inevitably become more and more at odds with the RS's stated political objectives. In the current climate, the best we may be able to hope for is little to no progress on the NATO agenda and a stalled defense reform process. If current negative trends continue, the RS could withdraw its support for NATO processes altogether, perhaps with Dodik and his party actively working towards their professed policy goal of dismantling the Bosnian armed forces. END SUMMARY

Bosnia's NATO Mission: Lights Are On, Nobody Is Home

12. (C) The Bosnian government rented office space in Brussels for its NATO mission in March 2008, but the offices remain dark and empty, with supplies still in boxes, according to Goran Pranjic, a member of Bosnia's NATO Coordination team. Pranjic accompanied Alkalaj to the meeting with NATO SYG. Bosnia's inability to staff its NATO mission is one of the telling examples the SYG raised with the Minister about Bosnia's (in)capacity to implement the NATO-related reforms in today's terrible political climate. Although all parties claim to appreciate the importance of staffing the 12-person mission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the three members of the Tri-Presidency have been at stalemate over its composition for a year. The

cabinet of Serb member of the Tri-Presidency Nebojsa Radmanovic opposed the original proposal based on a technical (if correct) interpretation of the defense law, which could have been resolved provided sufficient good will existed within the Presidency. A revised proposal was submitted to the Presidency in September, but it too has not been approved and was taken off the agenda at the October 15 Presidency session. While our discussions with the Presidency cabinets reveal that there are still genuine disagreements over the ethnic composition of Bosnia's NATO mission, the inability to work together isn't limited to interethnic disputes. The Bosniak-led MFA and MOD -- each responsible for staffing half of the ethnically-balanced mission -- have made things worse by failing to come up with a unified proposal. Last week the MOD passed the buck by submitting at the same time, without MFA concurrence, three separate proposals to the Presidency, giving the Serbs yet another free pass to obstruct the appointments by highlighting the incompetence of Bosniak-led state institutions.

Broader NATO Buy-In May Be Harder Than Defense Reform

13. (C) Bosnia's in-country capacity to meet Bosnia's NATO obligations and implement the reforms required to take additional steps towards membership remains woefully inadequate too. Pranjic, the author of Bosnia's NATO PFP Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) and Intensified Dialogue (ID) documents, is one of only two MFA officials working NATO issues. Other ministries have sent officials to participate in Intensified Dialogue talks since they

SARAJEVO 00001656 002 OF 004

kicked-off in October, but Pranjic says that, other than the MOD, they have failed to create the necessary internal bureaucratic mechanisms to develop and oversee NATO-related reforms within their ministries. In any case, the individuals these ministries have appointed to work NATO-related issues have not been senior enough or enjoyed sufficient support from the ministry's leadership to get necessary work done. Bosnia's NATO Coordination Group has proposed that Bosnia's Council of Ministers hold special quarterly sessions on Bosnia's NATO process in order to improve understanding of NATO and to get buy-in from other ministries. Despite his professed interest in Euro-Atlantic integration, Bosnian Serb PM Spiric has yet to act on this proposal. Pranjic acknowledges that as the NATO process requires reforms across a broader swath of government, they will be harder to push through.

Undoing the Moveable Defense Property Agreement

14. (C) In the meantime past successes in defense reform are grinding to a halt. Petty disputes in the Tri-presidency are stalling implementation of moveable defense property reform to which the entities and state agreed in March 2008 (Ref A). Implementation of the agreement, which would allow the armed forces to sell, donate or destroy excess (and old) ammunition and weapons, is one of Bosnia's Defense Sector obligations in its IPAP and part of the five objectives and two conditions set by the PIC for OHR's closure. The cabinets of Croat President Komsic and Serb President Radmanovic (who have sparse expertise in weapons and ammunition) are in protracted disputes about the fate of various items on the excess equipment list. On the Serb side, these disputes have an ideological underpinning: they believe the RS has the right to decide, via their member of the Presidency, to whom property that lies within the RS will be sold or donated. This is at odds with the transfer agreement and suggests that despite the agreement, many Serb officials continue to view this property as belonging to the RS rather than to the state. Komsic's Chief of Staff accuses the Serbs of making an unacceptable secret deal to "donate" ten aircraft to Serbia in consideration for the RS's wartime debt to Serbian military hospitals, a deal corroborated by Belgrade press

during a recent trip to Belgrade by Minister of Defense Cikotic. Radmanovic's security advisor is coy about that deal, but refuses to allow the proposed list of excess weapons on the Presidency agenda because he claims that the Bosniak Minister of Defense is playing fast and loose with the true quantity of military assets. We have verified that list the MOD submitted was inconsistent with the armed forces inventory, but incompetence, rather than something more nefarious, appears to explain the discrepancies. Regardless, the Serbs have their foil.

Immoveable Defense Property: Prospects Poor

15. (C) Prospects are even worse for an agreement on immoveable defense property, a PIC objective, IPAP obligation, and the most important outstanding objective of defense reform. The Ministry of Defense, with substantial help from NATO HQ, is drafting an agreement according to plan, and will present an initial draft before the November PIC. The agreement will need to guarantee something close to exclusive state use, but is unlikely to provide for outright state ownership, of properties needed for Bosnia's defense needs (both for the Ministry of Defense and the Bosnian Armed Forces). Getting the parties to sign it, however, will require difficult political compromises for which there seems to be no political will. Any agreement will have (possibly formal) precedential value on a future settlement of the overall state property question, which is stuck in an ideological stalemate between RS parties' opinion that entities should own everything and the Bosniak parties' opinion that the state should.

The Fork in the Road

16. (C) As Bosnia's progress towards NATO begins to require broader, state-building reforms from across the government, RS politicians will approach a fork in the road where they will have to choose between their professed commitment to the NATO accession process and their campaign to keep state institutions weak and dysfunctional. Bosnia's IPAP, which the Tri-presidency approved in February 2008, calls for

SARAJEVO 00001656 003 OF 004

strengthening the capacities of state-level judicial institutions, the Ministry of Security, the Ministry of Finance and other state-level institutions. Just as Bosnia has begun its formal dialogue with NATO on this process, the escalating rhetoric from the RS casts doubt on the supposed commitment of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and its leaders (RS PM Dodik, Presidency member Radmanovic, and PM Spiric) to eventual NATO membership at all. Radmanovic's Security advisor (who is critical to Presidency decisions on NATO and military matters) reiterated to us, October 17, that the abolition of Bosnia's armed forces is a long term goal of SNSD, echoing a recent editorial by SNSD Secretary General Rajko Vasic, which stressed that SNSD would insist on this as part of any constitutional reform. (Note: Radmanovic's advisor, as well as others we have spoken to within SNSD, do not believe abolition of the Bosnian armed forces would preclude NATO membership. End Note.) With this goal in mind, Radmanovic's advisor told us that his boss will support reductions in defense spending for the next fiscal year. It is notable that last year, all members of the Presidency, including Radmanovic, supported an increase in defense spending.

RS: No More Competency Transfers, NATO Be Hanged

17. (C) On October 8, Bosnia's parliament failed to pass the law on the movement of weapons, one of Bosnia's IPAP and ID obligations. Bosnia's IPAP states: "There is a clear need to regulate this at the state level." Currently, this responsibility rests with EUFOR, and the law's passage is

necessary to complete the handover of authority from EUFOR to the state. The law was sent back to committee when RS MPs threatened to block it with their entity veto. RS MPs argued that they would only support a law that gave give the entities, not the state-level ministry of security, authority to issue licenses for the movement of weapons across entity boundaries and international borders. The claim was at odds with earlier support by Serb and RS officials for the law during its drafting phase and consideration by the Council of Ministers. The RS MPs also argued that the law required a competency transfer from the entities to the states, which they would oppose on principle. (Note: This claim is false. The draft law would take no existing authority away from the RS. The RS MPs first indicated they would oppose the law in May 2008. The October debate was the latest in a series of attempts by them to derail it, but the tone of their October objections was shriller than in the past. End Note)

RS: State-Building is Anti-RS

18. (C) RS politicians used the debate on the draft law on the movement of weapons to argue that they are regularly the victims of Bosniak attempts to dominate them via state-level institutions, and ultimately destroy the RS. During the debate, they made several spurious claims, including that the law would allow the state to control the import (or, presumably, movement across entity lines) of weapons by RS Ministry of Interior officers. In fact, the law clearly excludes entity police along with Bosnian Armed Forces, and would only apply to commercial import and transfer of weapons across the entity line. The RS message was clear: strengthening state institutions in any way, even the long anticipated handover of authority from an international organization to the state, constitutes an attack on the interests of the RS. RS representatives went out of their way to emphasize that this was an issue of vital interest to the RS, rather than a difference of opinion about how weapons movements should be regulated, adding that Bosniak attempts to secure its passage again showed why entity voting was necessary to protect their interests from an anti-Serb Bosnian state. (Comment: The RS MPs obstruction may have practical reasons too: in the event that EUFOR leaves without a state-level law to replace the competency, the state would lack one legal basis to regulate imports of weapons to private security firms. Some have suggested that RS PM Dodik is building up private security firms into a private army (Ref B). End Comment)

COMMENT

19. (C) NATO accession remains one of the few stated common goals of a divided Bosnia, and defense reform is still heralded as one of Bosnia's biggest post-Dayton success

SARAJEVO 00001656 004 OF 004

stories. RS officials still say they support NATO accession processes even while they openly challenge any strengthening of state institutions that the process naturally requires. This partly reflects a misunderstanding about the type of reforms required to be a productive member. Regardless, it shows that the NATO and defense reform agendas are no longer immune from the bitter ethnic politics that have continued to plague Bosnia. In the current climate, Bosnia's recent success achieving ID status is, at best, likely to give way to a frozen reform process. At worst, the fundamental tension between the NATO reform process and the RS objective of keeping the state as weak as possible may lead RS officials to abandon their pro-NATO stance.

ENGLISH